DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 215 062 UD 022 234

AUTHOR Emihovich, Catherine A.
TITLE The Color of Misbehaving: Two Case Studies of Deviant Boys in a Magnet School.
PUB DATE 22 Mar 82
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, March 22, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Standards; Blacks; Case Studies; Discipline; *Institutional Role; Kindergarten Children; Primary Education; Psychological Characteristics; *Racial Bias; *Racial Discrimination; Student Behavior; *Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior; Whites

ABSTRACT

Case studies of a black boy and a white boy from a kindergarten class in a desegregated school examined the effects of teacher attitudes on students' conformity to classroom behavior norms. Both boys had been referred to the school psychologist by their teacher because of their disruptive classroom behavior. Information collected on the two boys included their family background, the psychologist's diagnosis and observations, and researcher observations of the boys' behavior and interactions with the teacher. The findings showed that the teacher appeared to perceive the boys differently, behaved differently toward them, and tended to direct more positive actions for behavior improvement toward the white boy. It was suggested that stricter controls were placed on the white boy's behavior with the expectation that he would eventually control himself. It was further stated that the black boy's behavior was allowed to escalate to the point of requiring special measures (a Learning Adjustment Class): the underlying expectation being that there was no point in controlling him because his status (race, socioeconomic background) conspired against him. It was further suggested that the differences in treatment were not an isolated example of personality clashes, but instead reflected institutional racism in the wider sociocultural context of the school, where standards of behavior are applied differently to white and black students. (Author/MJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED215062

THE COLOR OF MISBEHAVING: TWO CASE STUDIES OF DEVIANT BOYS IN A MAGNET SCHOOL

Catherine A. Emihovich

Social Services Training Project
State University College at Buffalo

Paper presented at a symposium entitled, "The Politics of Color: Social Interaction in Desegregated Schools," at the 1982 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York City, March 22, 1982

Rockwell Hall 211
1300 Elmwood Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14222

UD 022 234

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
CATHERINE A. EMIHOVICH
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

If an outsider were to eavesdrop on conversations held in the teachers' lounge, he or she might hear the following exchange:[1]

Teacher A: I don't know what I'm going to do with Johnny Jones. He was just impossible today.

Teacher B: Well, what do you expect? You know he comes from a poor family with no father, and that's the way they behave anyway.

Teacher A: Yeah, I know. But it's too bad. He could be such a nice kid if only he could learn to control his behavior. Perhaps putting him in a special class would help him do that.

Teacher B: It might. And at least he'd be out of your class.

Two significant points can be made about this little exchange. One, both teachers made attributions about the child's behavior which reflected their perception of him as a member of specific classes (disadvantaged, broken family, minority), rather than as an individual. And two, the deviant behavior and control for it are viewed as exclusively the child's responsibility; there is no acknowledgment of the teacher's expectations as an intrinsic part of a dyadic relationship. Teachers are pleased to assume responsibility when a child does well, but are not willing to accept responsibility for a child's misbehavior.

Past research has extensively documented the effect of teacher expectations on student achievement (Brophy and Good, 1974; Flanders, 1970; Landes, 1965; Leacock, 1969; Mehan, 1973; Nash, 1976; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; St. John, 1971), but less well researched is the effect of teacher's expectations on students' conformity to classroom norms of appropriate behavior. It is only within the last ten years that researchers such as Bossert, 1977;

Cazden, 1979; Cicourel, 1974; Green and Wallat, 1980; McDermatt, 1977; Mehan, Cazden, Coles, Fisher and Maroules, 1976; Wallat and Green, in press, have begun to examine teacher-student interaction in terms of the construction of social norms within different contexts. The research described in this paper builds upon that framework by suggesting that the "messages" transmitted between the teacher and the two boys were subtly influenced by the teacher's awareness of classes of difference between the two boys. The boys engaged in similar behavior (in one context, they performed the identical behavior) that the "messages" they received both verbally and nonverbally, indicated their behavior was perceived differently by the teacher. However, it is further suggested that this relationship was not an isolated example of personality clashes, but instead was embedded in a larger context where the interactional patterns were themselves constrained by administrative and community expectations regarding successful desegregation implementation.

The case studies of the two boys were drawn from a year-long ethographic study of two kindergartens in a magnet school. The school was one of ten magnet schools created in response to a court ordered desegregation plan in a medium sized, urban city. The issue of desegregation was a volatile one for the community, where great fear had been expressed about the possibility of racial violence and "looking bad" in the eyes of the world. Thus far, desegregation appears to have been successfully implemented with a steady increase in applications to the magnet schools (including some from the suburbs). All magnet schools were required to be racially balanced;

this school had a 50-50 ratio in the early grades. However, by the third grade, there was some loss of white students, so that by the upper grades (6-8), the school was predominately minority. The school administration was also very concerned with control of student behavior; all students and staff were required to wear identification badges with a picture on it so "outsiders" could be easily spotted, and "troublemakers" easily identified. Students deemed especially trustworthy by the administration were given a special "license" affixed to their badges which meant they could walk the halls without a pass from the teacher. In addition, several teachers had been denied tenure for their inability to maintain discipline in the classroom.

The two boys, Mark (black) and Ricky (white)[2], were members of the same kindergarten class: a class which had a substitute teacher for the first two months of school until the regular teacher returned from maternity leave. Both boys had been referred to the school psychologist by the substitute teacher for their "extremely disruptive" classroom behavior. Although part of the problem was the substitute's inability to administer effective discipline, my field notes indicated that some control was necessary to protect other children's safety and to ensure that instructions could take place. It will not be argued that the boys were inappropriately recommended; what is argued is that the recommendations for controlling the boys' behavior were not equally enacted by the classroom teacher.

Ricky was seen by the school psychologist, a resource teacher who dealt with special education children, and a guidance counselor. The psychologist's notes indicated that although Ricky came from an intact family where both parents worked, it was one with a troubled history. The parents only attended a parental conference under the threat of

Ricky's dismissal from the school. The father, described by the psychologist as "heavy-handed," made it clear he believed physical punishment (using a belt) was an appropriate method for "keeping Ricky in line." The fact that Ricky often came to school with visible welts and bruises lead the school staff to suspect the father's methods veered perilously close to child abuse, and only the fact that Ricky's condition improved over time, prevented them from filing a complaint. Ricky's two older siblings in the school (sister and brother) had also been seen before by the psychologist, referred for a similar complaint of disruptive behavior, and had borne the same marks of violence.

Ricky's mother was described as "laissez-faire", so unconcerned with her son's welfare that she let him come to school hungry, wearing the same clothes five days in a row, and "stinking of urine." Having seen Ricky, I would not have been surprised to learn he slept in the same clothes he wore to school (he was a chronic bed-wetter, as well). When the mother worked, Ricky was often supervised by his older sister (age 11), who was not able to handle the responsibility. Ricky's mother also reported "strange" things about him, such as the fact that he was very quiet and withdrawn at home, and never expressed any feelings, even when his father hit him.

The psychologist gave Ricky a full battery of tests (Stanford-Binet, Goodenough, TAT, Bender-Gestalt), and found no abnormalities. He was also discovered to be quite bright, with an IQ of 124. The psychologist noted that in one-on-one situations, Ricky demonstrated the ability to discuss his behavior, showed a good vocabulary, and possessed a high degree of creativity. He had been in day care from the time he was two, attending five

days a week for two years until he was eligible for pre-kindergarten classes at his present school.

The diagnosis reached by the three specialists was that Ricky's behavior was the "acting out of hostile impulses he could not direct toward his parent, particularly his father." They made the following recommendations: (1) the parents should seek counseling to resolve family tensions; (2) Ricky should be provided with breakfast by the school so he wouldn't come to school hungry and irritable; (3) an adult should be assigned to work with him on an individualized basis to provide more emotional support; and (4) a reward schedule should be devised to reinforce his periods of good behavior. No further data were available to assess whether #1 was followed, but the school did give him breakfast (he paid for it), a guidance counselor made frequent visits to talk to Ricky, and Mrs. B concentrated on praising Ricky whenever possible.

Mark was referred at approximately the same time Ricky was, and interviewed by the same team. His family background was that he lived with his mother and grandmother, visited occasionally by his father, who was separated from his wife. His mother was young (17 when she had Mark), and an AFDC (Aid to Families of Dependent Children) recipient. In her conference with the psychologist (although the father did not come with her, the psychologist had met him previously in school and had said he was a very attractive man), she complained of Mark's behavior at home and declared, "I can't do nothing with that boy." The psychologist's impression of her was that she was a very dependent individual who was overwhelmed by the task of caring for a strong-willed boy. The psychologist also elicited the information that Mark shared a bed with his mother, a practice she suggested should stop.

Mark had been in daycare from the time he was 18 months old, and when he was about three, he had been recommended for counseling at a local child and adolescent psychiatric center. His mother went a few times, but then stopped because "it dindn't do no good." The same tests on Mark revealed he was a bright child (his IQ score was 110 , but the psychologist felt it would had been higher if he had paid more attention to the tasks), with a great many hostiie feelings. The diagnosis on Mark was that he lacked the inner controls needed to suppress his aggressive impulses, resulting in disobedience, backtalk, and assaultive attempts on children and adults. The recommendations for Mark in his report were: (1)he and his mother should continue their outside counseling sessions; (2)he should receive individualized attention from an adult; and, (3) further evaluations should be undertaken to monitor his progress.

All of these recommendations were implemented. Mark's mother did resume visits to an outside psychologist, but stopped going in February (no reason was given). Mark was also assigned a student monitor, but her class participation ended in December. Throughout the second semester, a black male college student sporadically visited Mark, but he was never involved in any sustained program. In February, the psychologist observed Mark through a one way mirror for an hour one day only, and noted some improvement in his behavior. According to her notes, he was more able to handle group work and listen to directions, and he engaged in fewer acts of destruction,against the other children. However, she noted he was still very 'mouthy", often "backtalked" Mrs B, and demanded constant attention from her.

Apart from this observation, and the two initial diagnostic observations on Ricky and Mark, these were the only times the two boys' behavior was observed in context. And even then, none of the observations were long enough to grasp a sense of how each boy behaved in a variety of contexts, not just in an instructional setting. This lack was unfortunate, since my field notes indicated that most of the boys' behavior served definite purposes in sustaining their peer roles, and was not just senseless violence. My feelings, based on observations and interactions with the two boys over time, was that Ricky was more troubled than Mark, despite his being better able to conform to Mrs. B's expectations. His conformity was less a function of any real underlying change, than in being provided with a more optimal environment which facilitated his attempts to master his behavior. Mark, in contrast, was not provided with the same environment. These differences are readily apparent when selected video-tapes and observations and interview transcripts are analyzed in detail.

Around February, Mrs. B began hinting to the psychologist that Mark's behavior was not improving, and that perhaps placement in an "L.A." (Learning Adjustment) class should be considered. The observations and tapes I was collecting indicated just the opposite: Mark was behaving very well for a child Mrs. B labelled as "unable to control his behavior." While watching the tape of a math lession called "strings," I raised this point with Mrs. B:

> C: now in the other tape which I'm now going to show you/in the other example Mark is in the group and I notice he was pretty good in that/is he usually good in these groups
>
> T: he/uh/when he's/he's/his skills are good/he's not good in the group/he was better today than I thought he was in the last strings game/and he's good you know/he enjoys these things but uh/ his attention isn't long enough for them/but I think his thinking is good and he's high in the groups/when he gets/when he gets focused but he is uh/difficult to keep focused and he uh/ what happens is that he competes and the/he yells everything out (note: so does Ricky) and the kids who are taking a little bit longer to think can't then have a chance

C: yeah/who makes the recommendation that he go to an L.A. class/you/or the school psychologist

T: I pushed/they had him referred in October I guess/and all they did was uh/the resource team referred him to a private psychologist where he went for a year/and then in December uh

C: he went for a year

T: well he went for most of this year/she stopped a couple months ago/but from wherever they referred his whole family went/but uh/about February I said you know wait/ what is this kid doing/and the only alternatives we have is/are to keep him here uh/but I don't think he can/I think the group's too large for him uh/and for some/an individual to get to him for what he needs/ and I think he would get lost/and what happens is/the uh/the behaviors even if/I stay on top of them and he gets/and you get him to perform/he goes into the cafeteria and the cafeteria ladies/you know/have discipline problems with him and the gym people have discipline problems with him/and ultimately it's not to his own best interests/so that I just pushed for something/and the only place that we could really uh/see that he could be appropriately/his needs met/was in an L.A. class where he'd be in a group of seven or eight/in a first grade/so that the skills would be challenging but that he'd be able to get the attention/here it would be a group of 25 and resource help/but uh/but he really doesn't need that/he doesn't need one to one tutorial/cause he has to/a lot of discipline problems are group related so that/but he's gotta/he needs so much attention to get into focus on where he is that/you know/a teacher with 25/even breaking into four small groups can't/you can't leave him alone/you just finish you know/he has to have somebody with him/ so that the only place that we could come up that was even/and the committee on the handicapped will ultimately decide whether or not that's appropriate

C: I see/OK

To evaluate the significance of Mrs. B's remarks, the reader needs to know the following facts: (1) a "Learning Adjustment" class is designed for children of average to above average ability whose "emotional problems" (not physical or neurological) prevent them from working up to their full potential; (2) because this school has no L.A. class, Mark would have to be

sent to another school to attend one; and (3) although Mrs. B gives the impression the committee on the handicapped will make the final decision, it is the teacher's recommendation which carries the most weight -- a member of the committee only made one behavioral observation of Mark; the school psychologist, two. In addition to these facts, Mrs. B's comments about Mark need to be compared with her comments about Ricky.

In the same interview, immediately following my last comment, I asked Mrs. B, "now what happens with Ricky here?" At that point, we were watching a tape of a math lesson where Ricky interrupted to talk about an "octopus," and Mrs. B put her hand on his shoulder to quiet him:

> T: it's about the eighth time I've turned him around (laughs)
>
> C: yeah I know/what do you think is happening here
>
> T: I think that he doesn't/he/I think he understands it and he turns it off/I could have had him leave more positively/I suppose/but he could have stayed with it too/it was just/he
>
> C: is he like that a lot in the group
>
> T: he's uh/he's distractible and antsy in any kind of situation/he's better though/and he has the ability you know when he's really uh/when things are more challenging to him he can stick with it for 20-25 minutes and not/he loses that distractibility/in the morning when he writes his own stories it takes him 25 minutes to get the picture and all the words written and it all straight and he's fine/in fact our pooling of five to six people at the table and they're all dealing with crayons and things he gets distracted/but you move him to a place where that's gone he can stick with it/it's uh he talks all the time his mouth goes all the time (laughs)

When her comments are analyzed in conjunction with her earlier description of Ricky as one who "gets it in about two seconds and then you lose him because there's not enough happening for him," it appears Mrs. B is apologizing for not making the lession sufficiently interesting to

keep Ricky's attention. She is also indulgent of his misbehavior, viewing it as the product of a bright child who acts up because he is bored, a failing on her part. Earlier in the interview, while watching Ricky play with the "meter stick" on the same video tape she made this comment:

> T: Ricky picks up so much that you don't think he's picking up/ and he retains it and uh.../and that/ the other day with uh/Torchy the firefly he related Torchy to Taurus and the planets and the planetarium and uh/and he was obnoxious at the planetarium but[5] he (laughs) you know (laughs)

For some reason I can't explain, her comment led me to ask the next question.

> C: do you #ever do you have access to the kid's I.Q scores and things like that
>
> T: the only one I have it on is Ricky
>
> C: the only one you have it on is Ricky/do you mean that's the only one you asked to have tested/or thats the only one they tested or ...
>
> T: that's the only one they tested that they gave#did an IQ on/uh cause they only tested this year the kids that#uh/they don't all#they don't give out IQ's anyhow/but when the resource team does # their workup they give an IQ/they start with an IQ

The point Mrs B wanted to make was that it was not the school's policy to routinely test incoming children's IQ, but instead to do so only if they had been referred to the resource team for a "workup" on their "problems". However, she did not mention that Mark had also been referred and tested; almost certainly Mrs. B knew his IQ as well since she received a copy of the report. In psychometric terms,

Ricky's IQ (124) was one standard deviation higher (15 points - the assumed difference in the population between the average white and black IQ) than Mark's IQ (110). When Mrs. B's comments about the two boys are compared, it is clear that Ricky was perceived as a child of 'superior' ability whose "nasty" behavior in groups stemmed from the fact that "there's not enough happening for him" to keep him interested. Mark, on the other hand, was perceived as a child of 'average' ability whose group problems stemmed from the fact that he is "difficult to keep focused" and who "yells everything out" to the detriment of other children's learning. In evaluating these desriptions, the reader should know that during the first group lesson, Ricky never had a formal turn, but instead 'yelled' out responses from the floor, behavior which Mrs. B tolerated for some time. This pattern was not atypical; she often gave him much more lattitude in "lessons" than she did other children. Note also that Mrs. B's solution to Ricky's misbehavior in the group was to move him to another table where he could work alone quietly, whereas Mark was criticized for his inability to work within a group.

Mrs. B's differential treatment of the two boys was not limited to the instructional context. In a tape of a "spaceships" game, she rebuked Ricky for engaging in "bathroom talk" but not Mark, not even when Ricky complained to her about it. This little incident was an exemplar of a common pattern: whenever Ricky broke a classroom rule, he was immediately rebuked. In contrast, Mark was allowed to continue until his behavior reached the outrageous level; he then was placed in the "time-out chair" or sent to the office.[6] During the interview, I questioned Mrs. B about this difference:

C: how is it you yelled at Ricky in that incident and both of them were doing it

T: I must have just heard Ricky

C: you must have just have heard him

T: yeah (said in a tone of "and let's not discuss this further")

Mrs. B's answer is difficult to accept when one hears the tape; if nothing, Mark's voice is louder than Ricky's. By her prompt action in rebuking Ricky, Mrs. B provided him with the controls he lacked to make his behavior conform to classroom norms. Mark, on the other hand, was not checked until his behavior was completely out of control. Then, Mrs. B could label him as "uncontrollable" and use this label as justification for sending him to the L.A. class, and, consequently, out of the school. In my observations, I found that during the first semester, Ricky was involved in far more disruptions than Mark. Two reasons contributed to this fact: 1) Mark spent most of his time in the nursery class, because he liked the teacher and liked to help the younger children, who looked up to him; and, 2) he was assigned a student monitor, whose sole responsibility it was to monitor his behavior and keep him in line. Mrs. B eliminated both these practices at the beginning of the second semester.

My notes for the second semester revealed that disruptions were about equally divided between Ricky and Mark. Mrs. B could argue with some justification that since I was only there for one day a week for a short period of time, I missed all those occasions where Mark was "bad." During the interview, when I again commented on how "good" I thought Mark was in the "lesson," Mrs. B made a point of telling me how during lunch that day "Mark kicked a child in the stomach right after harassing a teacher and three handicapped kids." I have no doubt that in this respect she was right; I didn't see everything and Mark's frequency of disruptions was probably higher than Ricky's. But that's not the point. The critical issue is that because Mrs. B perceived them differently, she behaved differently toward them. By now, Ricky and Mark had been sorted into two different classes of persons, and this difference as a <u>difference which made a difference</u>.

If the above facts are accepted as true, one question is paramount: how did this situation develop? The answer cannot be found by citing personality conflicts, a facet of any interaction. To say that Mrs. B treated them differently because she liked Ricky better than Mark is not an explanation, nor does it allow for the possiblity of correntcing the problem. It would also be simplistic to say that because Ricky was white and Mark black that Mrs. B was prejudiced. In her interactions with other

black children in the class, I detected no sign that Mrs. B bore them any racial animosity. Furthermore, from private conversations with her I know she took it as a personal failure that she could not help Mark (without understanding her role in contributing to the problem, help would have been impossible), and agonized over the decision to recommend him for the L.A. class. In the end, she made the decision for "his own best interest."

It would also be too easy to view Mrs. B's behavior toward the two boys as one more example in the extensive literature cited earlier on teacher's differential expectations for bright, middle class white students vs. less bright, poor, black students.

Although her expectations clearly influenced her behavior, describing her as just another racist teacher ignores the fact that all her interactions with these two boys, and all the classroom behavior itself will embedded in a wider cultural context, the patterning of behavior replicating patterns in the larger society in which this school was placed. What was being enacted on the micro level was not individual racism, but institutional racism.

Sedlacek & Brooks (1976) defined institutional racism as "action taken by a social system or institution which results in negative outcomes for members of "certain group or groups." (p. 45).

My belief that the patterning of behavior was a manifestation of institutional racism is based on the psychologist's comments to me.

In conversations with her, she told me frankly she didn't feel Mark belonged in an L.A. class, and that his problems could be handled within a regular classroom if he had outside counselling. When I asked why she didn't raise this issue with the committee on the handicapped, she told me that "Mrs. B had a lot of influence in the school," and, "I could feel the pressure building to get this kid out and I didn't want to stick my neck out." Her statement has to be interpreted against the fact that although she was a licensed clinical psychologist, she was not a certified school psychologist, and could be dismissed at any time for that reason. At the time I interviewed her, she was attempting to obtain certification; later, after I had left the school, I learned she was fired for "incompetence."

In further conversation with her, I learned she was incensed over the firing of a black kindergarten teacher the year before for failing to maintain discipline, and criticized the lack of minority teachers (8 out

of 70) in a school with a 59% minority enrollment. Her comments echoed another teacher's comments to me in the lounge that the school administration made no effort to recruit minority teachers and put extra pressure on those who were there in the form of higher expectations concerning discipline.

When these facts are related to earlier facts that the school administration was preoccupied with controlling student behavior (e.g., ID badges, student licenses), and that a high premium was placed on teachers' ability to maintain control, and all these facts are assessed against the grim, but undeniable reality of black male teenage violence,[7] the real issue is identified. The campaign to get Marques into the L.A. class was not orchestrated against him as an individual, but as a member of a class (poor, black male from a broken home) with highly suspect history of violence, and limited potential for change. Since this campaign was carried out with administrative sanction, it is difficult to single out individuals as culprits. Marques stood condemned not for what he did, but for what he represented: the potential black troublemaker who could do untold damage to a school and its occupants.

If one examines the broader issues of race, classroom norms and the politics of desegregation, it seems that standards of behavior are applied differently for white and black students. Contrary to what one might initially hypothesize, stricter controls were placed on the white boy's behavior, which in a child this young, had a beneficial effect by providing him with the controls he lacked. Underlying the teacher's behavior was the expectation that eventually he would be able to control his own behavior. In contrast, the black child was not provided with the same set of controls; his behavior was allowed to continue until he was 'out of control', thus requiring special measures. And I suggest that the underlying expectation was that it didn't matter - the teacher felt there was no point in controlling his behavior because his status conspired against him. Instead of making the effort in her classroom, she felt he needed a "special" class to overcome his problem. If placement in an L.A. class conformed to ideal expectations (individualized attention within small groups), then Mark would benefit from being there. However, the unfortunate reality is that placement there means he will be branded a "troublemaker," a label which will follow him for the rest of his school career. It will be astonishing if a self-fulfilling prophecy does not occur, and Mark does not become another statistic in the crime ledger.

By removing minority children (primarily boys) with 'learning problems' to "special" classes, the tensions felt by white parents by such children's presence in the regular classroom is dissipitated. In effect, desegregation succeeds because of 'resegregation' within the school. This problem was recongnized as a critical issue in the 1976 report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights describing the impact of desegregation. As one of the authors noted:

> Minority students are more often suspended for 'institutionally inappropriate behavior. When a black student or parent refers to institutional racism, he or she is arguing that the institution has an obligation to alter its rules to make them less arbitrary and more consistent with the behavior patterns among blacks. On the other hand, when a white student or parent argues the need for discipline, he or she is implicitly sanctioning the system of institutional rules, and maintaining that black children must learn to adapt to that system. (p. 148).

No one would seriously argue that rules of behavior should not be spelled out to students, not that rules should not be enforced. The problem occurs because the rules are based on cultural expectations of approximate and inappropriate behavior within a school context. But in this paper I am suggesting that an even more subtle process occurs; teachers do not enforce initial rule violations by minority students because they expect them to behave that way. Then the constant disruptions are used as the rationale for implementing stringent measures: suspensions and assignment to "special" classes. Had Mark been given the same support to control his behavior as was given to Ricky, he too could have passed on to the first grade, since his academic ability was never doubted. The tragedy was that he was doomed from the start; he never had the chance to prove he could change.

One final question needs to be considered: could Mrs. B have prevented what transpired by passing Mark on to the first grade, where there was an outstanding black teacher who might have helped him? In one sense, the question is not fair, becuase Mark had a history of problems which followed him to kindergarten, and the initial referral was made before Mrs. B returned. In all likelihood, the outcome would have remained the same, except Mrs. B

would have damaged her chances for ever becoming more than a classroom teacher in that school (and that she was ambitious was recognized by everyone who knew her). It was also the case that Mrs. B was not fully aware of her role in acquiesing to the "hidden agenda" of social control; she was not, for example, in the position of defending a child whom she believed was being railroaded.

But in another sense, the question is fair, because at a deeper level, Mrs. B was very troubled by her decision. In her interviews, whenever she discussed Mark's behavior she became visibly more agitated; smoking in quick short puffs, her voice rose and she frequently stuttered, characteristics not in keeping with her general demeanor. At some fundamental level she may have known that what was happening to Mark was wrong, but no longer knew how to make it right. Her experience was not unique; it is doubtless played out in countless classrooms across the country. The tragedy is that there are no real villans. Good intentions were expressed by all the concerned parties, but the exigency of the situation acted against them. The only real hope is that if more teachers and administrators can be made aware of the "hidden agenda" underlying the school's social order, then perhaps steps will be taken to solve discipline problems in the classroom, rather than assignment to special classes.

Footnotes

1. This conversation is a pastiche of several such conversations I have heard, both as a former teacher and an observer in different schools. It is not a verbatim transcript of two specific teachers' conversation.

2. These names are pseudonyms.

3. At first, I wondered why no child ever made reference to Ricky's odor, but later I realized they were afraid he would beat them up. Much later, it was because he was Shane's friend (the most popular boy in the class).

4. This was a character in a story Mrs. B had read the day before.

5. The children had gone on a field trip to a local planetarium. Mark had not been allowed to go because of behavioral problems.

6. Ricky occasionally sat in the "time-out chair", but nowhere near the frequency of times Mark spent in it.

7. According to the latest statistics (Note 1), black male youths under 18 accounted for 21.4% of the total arrests, but 39% of the violent crime arrests (murder, rape, armed robberty and aggravated assaults). In cities with a population over 250,000, the percentage rose to 42.5%.

Reference Notes

1. Uniform Crime Reports. Washington, D.C. United States Department of Justice. Released September 24, 1980.

Bossert, S. T. Tasks, Group Management and Teacher Control Behavior: a Study of Classroom organization and teacher style. School Review, 1977, 85, 552-564.

Brophy, J. E. & Good, T. L. Teacher-Student Relationships, New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc. 1974.

Cazden, C., Language in Education: Variation in the Teacher-Talk Register. In Language in Public Life, 30th Annual Georgetown University Roundtable on Language and Linguistics, 1979.

Cicourel, A. V., Language Use and School Performance, New York: Academic Press, 1974

Flanders, N., Analyzing Teacher Behavior, Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1970.

Fulfilling the Letter and Spirit of the Law: Desegregation of the Nation's Public Schools. A report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D. C. 1976.

Green, J. & Wallat, C. Mapping Instructional Contents. In J. Green & C. Wallat (Eds.) Ethnographic approaches to face-to-face interactions in educational settings. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Co., 1980.

Landes, R. Culture in American Education, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965

Leacock, E. B., Teaching and Learning in City Schools, New York: Basic Books, 1969.

McDermott, R. Social Relations as contexts for learning in schools, Harvard Educational Review, 1977, 3, 135-136

Mehan, H. Assessing Children's School Performance, in H. P. Dreitzel (Ed.) Childhood and Socialization, New York: MacMillian, 1973.

Mehan, H., Cazden, C., Coles, L., Fisher, S., & Maroules, N., The Social Organization of Classroom Lessons. Center for Human Information Processing Lessons. Center for Human Information Processing, University of San Diego LaJolla, California, 1976

Nash, R., Teacher Expectations and Pupil Learning, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.

Rosenthal, R. & Jacobson, L., Pygmalion in the Classroom, New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1968.

Sedlacek, W. E. and Brooks, G. C., Racism in American Education. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976.

St. John, N. Thirty-six Teachers: Their Characteristics and Outcomes for Black and White Pupils, American Educational Research Journal, 1971, 8, 635-648.

Wallat, C. & Green, J., Construction of Social Norms by Teacher and Children: The First Year of School. In K. Borman (Ed.), Socialization of Childrne in a Changing Society, in press.